

WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

WASHINGTON - Sen. Ben Nelson , D-Neb. , was among several Midland lawmakers who welcomed the Iraq Study Group's call for change in policy.

"I believe it recommends that the cut the umbilical cord so Iraq can stand on its own ," said Nelson , a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Establishing goals and holding the Iraqi government accountable is "the right approach ," he said.

The congressionally chartered study group issued its report Wednesday , warning that the situation in Iraq is deteriorating. It recommended reducing support to the Iraqi government if it doesn't improve security. It also urged that the United States pursue diplomatic avenues to reduce the violence , including reaching out to Iran and Syria.

The report should help Congress and President Bush work together for a new policy that will allow the to leave and for the Iraqi people to take control of their own future , said Sen. Chuck Hagel , R-Neb.

"The report is an acknowledgement that there will be no military solution in Iraq ," said Hagel , a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who has traveled several times to . "It will require a political solution arrived at through sustained Iraqi and regionwide diplomacy and engagement."

Rep. Tom Osborne , R-Neb. , who is leaving Congress , said he was glad the panel didn't call for an immediate troop withdrawal. But Osborne , who has visited four times , added: "We really have to ramp up the heat on the Iraqis and let them know if they are willing to show a collective , cooperative will . . . we'll be there. And if they don't , we're not going to be there with an open checkbook and an unlimited number of men and women."

Rep. Lee Terry , R-Neb. , said he wants the to be able to pull its troops out of Iraq , but he also wants to be able to defend itself "from within and without." He said that he had yet to read the group's report but that it should lead to a welcome discussion of how to do things better.

"Doing something different is absolutely necessary " Terry said.

The report's emphasis on progressively modifying the training and deployment of Iraqi forces is very important , said Rep. Jeff Fortenberry , R-Neb.

"Iraqis must fight for their own country , " said Fortenberry , a member of the House International Relations Committee.

Sen. Chuck Grassley , R-Iowa , said that in recent weeks Bush and the Defense Department have accepted that policy in needs to change. "Consequently , I think with this new attitude there will be change , and the report will have some impact on it."

Meanwhile , Sen. Tom Harkin , D-Iowa , saw the report as an indictment of the Bush administration's "failed policies" in the Middle East . "There is little left our military can do , " he said of Iraq . "It is time to bring the troops home and concentrate on finding a political solution to the crisis in Iraq ."

Rep. Steve King , R-Iowa , had the opposite reaction.

King , who also has visited Iraq four times in recent years , said the commission was made up of "pacifists" who want to withdraw from a key battlefield in the war against terrorism.

"If we don't stop the terrorists in Iraq , they will follow us home , " he said.

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